1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
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neighbors paying friendly visits and of playing children gradually become stilled. It is the time for the evening meal. By nine o'clock at the latest all is quiet and Mirebalais, man and beast, is asleep.

The *vodun* drums are heard only on Saturday nights, and then the dance must be sufficiently close to the town, and the wind in the right direction, for the sound to be audible. Permits for these dances must be obtained, and are regularly given by the police officials — or were in 1934 — and word is passed on that on a given Saturday certain households will give *vodun* dances. If the dances are held in the foothills to the west, the Tombe River must be forded, and the existence of such a barrier between the village and the site of the dance makes this a favorite region in which to hold them, even though they may have official sanction. During the rainy season attendance at dances on the opposite bank of the Artibonite River depends on the height of the stream, for when it is in flood not even the dugout canoes of the Haitians can cross it, while the ferry which Moreau de St. Mery speaks of as having been established in 1749 does not even exist in local tradition.[14] Yet no dance lacks participants or spectators, for these occasions furnish the principal opportunity for recreation even as they fill their proper religious function. Early in the week discussions can be heard of the dances to be held, and though the official frown of the Catholic priest is always to be reckoned with, the importance of these dances, and the numbers who attend them, do not seem markedly lessened by this fact. Those whose social position in the community makes them more sensitive to such criticism merely take the precaution to slip quietly out of town after dark.

When occasions of local or national significance and church holidays are celebrated, the town is full of country folk and visitors from the cities. Christmas and New Year's, Mardi Gras and Easter are all periods for such celebrations, while the first Sunday of every month witnesses a religious procession

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about the square that precedes the principal mass of the day. These processions, however, are as a mere rehearsal for the great procession held during the festival of St. Louis, the patron saint of the town. At the time the statue of the saint, carried by the faithful — among whom can be seen more than one perspiring *vodun* priest and *bocor* — is taken triumphantly through the streets to insure a good year. The nearness of the valley to the village of Ville Bonheur makes the great religious festival of Saut d'Eau, where the " miracle of the Virgin " is believed to have occurred, almost a local matter. And though Saut d'Eau lies well over the mountains, July 15 finds most of the population of Mirebalais away from home celebrating the miraculous revelation with folk from other parts of Haiti. May Day is celebrated as the " Fête de l'Agriculture," and two years ago a new day of rejoicing was added to the calendar of festivals. This is known as the " Festival of the Second Independence," the anniversary of the departure of the American Marines from Haiti, and is marked by the " illumination " of all houses the night before and a solemn discourse from the mayor after a Te Deum has been sung in the church.

Thus life in the valley of Mirebalais continues the course it has followed for the past two hundred years. Though its history, as we can reconstruct it, has been marked by turbulent periods, these have been far from the rule. It is true that because of its position it has always been a point to be defended, and often, both before and after the time of Haitian independence, it has been a region where decisive encounters with those who controlled the Spanish portion of the island have taken place. Not for many years, however, until the Caco uprising against the American Marines, did Mirebalais experience military activities on any considerable scale. After the death of Charlemagne Perrault, when his successor selected the valley as a strategic point to be defended, a large force of Marines was encamped near the confluence of the

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grain in her mortar or working in her garden near by. On market days she takes the produce of the family's fields to the town to sell. If she has young children, she cares for them while she does her other work, but when they are old enough, they help her about the house if they are girls, or, if boys, go with their father to the garden. From time to time, when house repairs are needed or there are implements to be mended, the man spends a day at home getting these odd jobs done; otherwise only serious illness in the family keeps him from his fields.

The times for meals have not varied since the days when Moreau de St. Mery described the eating-habits of the slaves.[1] In addition to the mid-morning repast, the only other meal is that eaten after the man returns from his field, this being the largest of the day. A wife does not sit down with her husband, but usually eats earlier with her small children and holds herself ready to serve him upon his return, when, if he is alone, she remains to tell him the day's gossip. Visitors are often present, for peasant etiquette demands that all comers be offered food, and, as one Haitian expressed it, "The peasant would kill you for the insult if you did not share your meal with him." Bedtime, as might be expected, is early.

On Sundays and on the days of festivals this routine is interrupted, when, if the occasion is of sufficient importance and the habitation is not too far from town, the peasant and his family attend mass. On Saturday nights there is usually a *vodun* dance, when the early hour for retirement is forgotten and all-night festivities precede Sunday's rest. On such days the principal meal is eaten at three or four o'clock in the afternoon, and all the adults share it together, while at one side the children are fed from the dishes of their parents in response to the insistent repetition of the demand "*Ba'm pa'm* — give me my portion." *

* This is an example of the elision characteristic of Haitian Créole, it being abbreviated from *Ba moin part moin* or, in French, *Donnez-moi ma part*.

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he is assured of more solicitous care from her and more deferential treatment from her children. And though when this has occurred his "legal" wife may at his death come with a justice of the peace to claim his body and his effects, this move is anticipated, so that what he has given the *placée* wife and her children is usually well out of the way. "Often they find only the four walls of the house."

A certain number of unmarried men result from this system of plural matings, some of whom remain single by preference, particularly in the cities, where the incidence of homosexuality far exceeds that found in the country. In Mirebalais itself, when the final withdrawal of the American Marines from Haiti was being celebrated, a dance called *manuba*, significantly enough the only one held indoors, was one in which male dancers danced together in couples. The sexual problem of the younger unmarried men is more often solved by means of liaisons with married women, though this has its dangers in the countryside, where the movements of every individual are known and the least tendency to unsanctioned social behavior is soon the subject for widespread gossip. Prostitutes are found everywhere, and they are by no means visited by unmarried men alone. On the whole, sex "adventures" are more indulged in by men than women, even allowing for the tendency of some women to have affairs with youths. A belief widely held, that plural wives tend so to exhaust the virility of a man that he must seek "remedies" of a magical nature from the priests of the *vodun* cult and from sorcerers, must also be mentioned. Frigidity is a principal cause for female homosexuality, and, because of a wife's reluctance to satisfy her husband, it not infrequently happens that she is sent back to her parents, where she may seek out other women. The most prevalent Haitian attitude toward homosexuality in either sex, it may be remarked, is one of derision rather than vindictiveness, as the term applied to effeminate men, *commères*, may suggest.

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lighted. Chicken and rice may also be cooked for any god except Gede, while chocolate and rice with milk are favored, since it is said "the *loa* love desserts"—a commentary on the very immediate and human character of these spirits.

The actual baptism, or "washing of the head," is performed on the third day of the ceremony by a *vodun* priest or priestess who is a member of the family, though any member who has important *loa* and the necessary *connaissance* may officiate if the membership of the family includes no priest. As at any baptism, there must be a godfather and godmother, and preference is given those who are the parents of twins or are themselves twins. The officiant must be possessed at the time, since, it is said, "one *loa* baptizes another." Leaves of the basilique tree are steeped in perfumed cold water, and the hands of the one who baptizes are first immersed in the liquid; then, while songs of the *loa* and canticles of the Virgin are sung, he washes the head of the person to be baptized. Possession occurs immediately, and the new devotee lies back, half conscious, while all others kneel, seeking word from the *loa* to learn if it is satisfied. If an affirmative answer is given, all retire, the person possessed remaining in the room to sleep through the night. A "ball," but not a *vodun* dance, may celebrate the event either the next day or later, but this is not obligatory, and most often those present, after eating, quietly disperse. The following day the one who has been baptized goes to the family place of worship and greets those who have helped him. Only one further rite is necessary, and this solely when the *loa bossal* is revealed to be a hostile god. Then the *loa*, after having been baptized, is "restrained" by being placed in a jar and buried, so it cannot later emerge and trouble the family of the one to whom it has come.[13]

The ceremony of baptism, in Mirebalais, is in no sense a first step into any *vodun* hierarchy, for, as will be seen, no such hierarchy exists in this valley. One important priest there derives his power from *loa* that have never been bap-

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Saturday nights. This is not because of the especially sacred character of the day, but rather because the Haitian government, in order to assure a continuous working week, refuses permits for other days. The occasions for the dances are varied, as is evident from those given during the course of this field-work. One of these was that of a *hungan* as a compliment to visitors "who knew Dahomey" and was conducted as a serious rite in the worship of the *loa*. Two dances marked the end of *services* for family gods, and were variously interpreted as tributes to the family dead and the twins, who must not be neglected in any religious observance, and as celebrations offered in praise of the gods who were to protect the families, giving the dances, to mark the "restraining" of the evil spirits responsible for their troubles. Two other dances celebrated the "baptism" and initial use of new sets of drums. As has been pointed out, there are also non-religious occasions on which *vodun* dances are given. On days of secular celebrations, such as the anniversary of the declaration of Haitian independence, or the withdrawal of the Marines, the *vodun* dancing is purely social, though the ritual drums are used, the sacred songs are sung, and the steps of the dances are those seen at any Saturday-night gathering. Added to the fact that no possessions or other manifestations of serious worship of the *loa* occur, the "secular" *vodun* dances differ from the others in that they are held away from any family shrine, taking place within towns or cities, something never permitted in their non-social, religious counterparts.

The *vodun* dance—and in the remainder of this chapter only the dance which has significance in the worship of the *loa* will be considered—is patterned like all other ceremonies of the cult.[1] It is held at a family habitation, under an open brush shelter known as a *tonnelle*, constructed for the occasion next to the family *maison de servitude*. If the habitation at which the dance is given is not the one where this house of worship is found, the shelter is built near a hut so that those possessed will have a place to retire.

2: Courlander 8-5 (1937-1954) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

tempo. The chorus and leader sing responsively, their parts overlapping in traditional African style. The shoulder movements, foot movements, the way the arms are carried, and the typical posture of feet flat on the ground, bent knees, and swayed back—all are of African derivation.

These postures and movements are broad and direct. There are few of the decorative and "fine" movements that one sees in the dances of Indonesia, Cambodia, and India. Where the Javanese lays stress on the pose of the hands and the delicate movements of the fingers, the Haitian dancer is concerned with the position of the arms and the motions of the shoulders. The Indonesian sense of poised balance or suspended movement is absent. In its place there is an attitude of strong frontal assault against natural forces such as gravity, or direct submission to those forces. There is almost always a feeling of solidity and stability in Haitian posture, and of a proximity between the body and the earth, but the total effect is dynamic. Indonesian dancing seems to express a comprehension of the unseen and the supernatural; Haitian dancing seems to express an intimate understanding of nature.

Dancing touches on virtually every aspect of life in Haiti. It plays a part in the supplication of loa, the placation of the dead, and the making of magic; in the consecration of a hounfor, the installation of a houngan, and the initiation of cult members; in planting, harvesting, and house-building. Catholic Church holidays, Nine Nights, baptisms, the election of a new president, and ordinary social gatherings—all are celebrated, in part, at least, by dancing.

Haitian dancing is participative rather than exhibitionistic. It is to join rather than to watch. There are some dances, however, which require special skills, and a few which are highly individualistic. Several types of dances are described elsewhere in this book. Verbal description cannot do justice to an art such as dancing, of course; but some brief sketches may help to suggest the differences between one Haitian dance and another.

In the Congo Mazonne, for example, men and women pair off and dance face to face, making contact occasionally but only briefly. The arms are stretched forward as though to embrace the partner around the waist, but the actual embrace never materializes. The partners dance sometimes as though they are unaware of each other and are simply part of a larger group; then they approach, move as mirrored reproductions, and separate. Loin movement is free, and there is a restrained sexual intensity, though direct sexual implications are not necessarily present. Sometimes the woman holds the hem of her skirt in her hands, while the man holds his jacket open toward his partner.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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One of Christophe's rules was that no cultivator attached to

a plantation—and every ordinary country person was so attached —might leave the estate without permission from a military officer.[10] Two of the common folkways of Haitian peasant life since his time have been immobility and general acceptance of orders from the military. Both characteristics had been fostered by slavery and by the régimes of Toussaint and Dessalines, and these folkways became fixed under Christophe.

Other rules introduced by the King, however, lapsed shortly after his strong hand was removed. For example, the monarch required of the whole population that whenever they visited the capital on feast days or went to the market towns on Saturdays they be decently clad in clean clothes.[11] Since the time of Christophe, neatness of appearance has hardly been a folk characteristic, probably because of poverty rather than lack of desire to dress well. Nor did scrupulous regularity of work in the fields continue as a folkway later, when the great plantations were broken up.

Like a father the King tried to inculcate moral standards of honesty in his people. To prevent theft he had small valuables, such as watches or jewelry or purses, "planted," and if the finder did not immediately turn them over to the nearest Dahomet, punishment was meted out. Such a policy made honesty contagious. Thefts and depredation were soon almost unknown. The most tempting store of wealth could be left safely unlocked or in the open air. Christophe's achievement in this matter is eloquent testimony to his success as a paternal leader, for it is no small task to initiate moral ideas among people who for a generation have lacked them. Even today it is the proud boast of the Haitians that their people are honest.

As compared with the liberties of farmers in the United States of the same period, the Haitian agricultural workers' freedom was infinitesimally small, but by contrast with the bondage of slavery, their new status was definitely higher.

10. Christophe called his royal police force "Dahomets," after the West African kingdom, Dahomey, from which most of the men had come. They were not ordinary soldiers but especially imported and carefully selected men whose intelligence made them stand out from their fellows. Each Dahomet was given a course of training in his task as administrator before being sent out. The general consensus of foreign visitors was that these Dahomets were efficient even in small matters.

11. This rule was partly an indication of Christophe's vanity, personal and national, for he was deeply desirous of the good opinion of white visitors, especially those from England. He wanted Europeans to respect Haiti as they would respect any small state, and not to praise it merely as an example of "Negro progress."

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may not have all the heart desires. Under Dessalines there had been stern discipline of the workers but no recognition of the aristocracy; now under Pétion the people went their own inefficient way, but aristocratic eminence was happily recognized.

Examples of experimental legislation abound. Some proposals succeeded but more failed. One of the partial successes was the establishment of an agricultural holiday, *la fête de l'Agriculture*, to stimulate interest in good cultivation. Two months before the day set, the commandants of departments, arrondissements, and cantons, together with the justices of these divisions, were to nominate the laborer in each parish who had done the best work of the year. A prize medal was awarded not only for the sake of honoring him but also to stimulate his fellows. Similarly the officials would choose a child between seven and ten years of age, living on the best cultivated *habitation* in the district and belonging to parents most distinguished by their conduct and fondness for work, to be brought up and educated at the expense of the state. The annual feast was celebrated for many years after Pétion's death, but the officials became too lax to make careful selections of prize-winners. The holiday was kept, therefore, but served none of its original purposes.

As a case of legislation that failed may be cited the highly moral measure encouraging, but not requiring, legitimate marriages among cultivators rather than the customary informal union without ceremony. The preamble of this law pointed out that legal marriages were

> the only means of assuring a person of all the advantages of society; of procuring consolation, care, and help in sorrows and in sickness; of making purity of customs, so necessary for the happiness of men and the conservation of their health, reign among the people; of steadily increasing the population of each habitation; of extending agriculture and of increasing production.[30]

The mass of people, however, had had no experience of legal marriage. In the time of slavery such unions would not have been respected by an owner who wished to sell his slaves, and Dessalines had seemed to care very little whether people married or merely lived together informally. It will shortly be seen in detail how lasting was this inertia of tradition.[31]

30. Cited in Saint-Rémy, *op. cit.*, V, 29.
31. See Part III, "Sex Relations and Home Life."

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[1804-1843]

A cultivator who loafs on his assigned job shall spend twenty-four hours in jail for his first offense and lose his wages; for a second offense he must work on public projects. Field labor shall be regularly carried on from Monday morning until Friday evening, except for legal holidays; work begins at dawn, continues except for a half-hour at breakfast until noon, stops then for two hours, and is once more resumed until sunset. Pregnant females are to be assigned to light work only, and after the fourth month of pregnancy need do no field work. Four months after delivery, a mother is to return to field work, but with three hours a day less than before, until she has weaned her child. Disobedience and insult to overseers are punishable by imprisonment. Since Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays are free, there is to be no dancing or any other festivity by night or day from Monday through Friday.

On each estate is to be a hierarchy of directors, all of whom the workers shall obey. In ascending order, these men are drivers (or squad foremen),[92] jobbers, sublessees, lessees, proprietors and managers, overseers of districts, and police.

In establishing a system of remuneration Boyer kept the accustomed method of allotting a proportion of the marketed crop to the workers in lieu of hourly or daily wages. In any season from a quarter to a half of the gross receipts of the estates was to go to the laborers, the exact proportion in any year to be determined by the government. It was assumed by Boyer and Inginac that there would be an added inducement to work if the laborers' share were distributed not equally, but rather in proportion to the merit and worth of the individual, these evaluations to be made by the recommendation of overseers.

Enforcement of the Code was placed in the hands of local justices and the army. Soldiers were to be assigned to each plantation, receiving their living from it, in return preserving order and routine. Although the whip was once more prohibited, steady labor might still be enforced by other means; the law definitely stated that soldiers were to discipline the lazy, the lawless, and the vagrant. Local justices were to deal with any civil difficulties arising in the execution

92. The word "driver" was commonly used in West Indian slave colonies with no other meaning than that attached to the word when one speaks of a man "driving" his horses. It is not necessary to beat a horse to make it go properly; a word of direction may suffice.

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plausible, such as the race prejudice displayed by many individual Marines;[4] the unnecessary slaughter in the suppression of *cacos* (guerrilla) rebellions in the North; the continued holding of offices (and salaries) by Americans too impatient to train Haitians, as by the Agreement of 1915 they were supposed to do; the fostering rather than elimination of military psychology among the people by the presence of armed Marines.

The campaign against the Occupation was generally on the highest level of patriotism, for it threw out one variation after another on the same theme: We Haitians are not being allowed to govern ourselves. Some realists knew that their hurt national pride was accompanied by disappointment that certain salaries were not reaching Haitian pockets, certain prestige of office not redounding to the credit of Haitian men. What if the real reason for opposition were not the openly avowed one? The Marines must go! Order had been restored and government reëstablished. It was patent that any administration which could effect the withdrawal would be immensely popular: it was equally patent that if the Americans left the country, the benefits of their efficiency and material improvement would remain as a tangible boon to Haiti.

President Stenio Vincent, elected in 1930 after a campaign in which the Americans did not interfere, began the negotiations with Washington. With President Hoover he made headway toward reforms, but President Roosevelt's attitude was more actively cooperative. In 1934 Vincent had a series of conferences with the President of the United States; the latter, in pursuit of his good-neighbor policy, persuaded the American Senate to order the Occupation at an end and turn over without cost to Haiti many buildings, supplies, and equipment used by the Marines. Vincent personally benefited from the withdrawal of 1934. He called himself Haiti's "second Liberator,"[5] and made the anniversary of the American departure a national holiday. Indirectly the élite also benefited for now, entrenched in office, they could govern without white supervision. The material equipment was there to be enjoyed by the whole people at no further expense to them.

4. The United States government in the early days had sent Marines from the Southern States to Haiti, on the theory that they would, from long acquaintance with Negroes, know how to "handle" them. This stupid blunder was shortly rectified.

5. Dessalines had, of course, been the first.

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have been gathered from trees which grew wild. Both men and women labor, with the work divided according to regular custom between the sexes, the men dominating the scene only in the marketing of coffee.

Nature was opulent enough at the beginning of Haitian independence. The wars had ruined irrigation ditches, sugar refineries, and mechanical equipment, but the soil was still abundantly fertile. But generations of farming by people without knowledge of fertilization or soil conservation have worn out much of the land. Trees have been cut to provide lumber and clearings for more farms; in the rainy seasons torrents have coursed down the mountainsides, washing away soil and exposing the earth to the rays of a tropical sun. Because the country is overpopulated every available acre is put to use, and to overuse, thus still more depleting the land. It is a vicious circle, for the next generation must extract yet more from the earth and so weaken it further. Hard work is the lot of the peasant, therefore, during every month of the year except the dry season. There has never been a formal rotation of crops: a farmer continues to plant the same crop in the same field until the harvest is perceptibly smaller than before. Then he changes to another type of produce. Sooner or later he will allow the land to lie fallow for several years until, by the action of nature or the grazing over it of cattle, it has regained a measure of its fertility.

The strenuous work of clearing fields and preparing them for cultivation is man's job. Since the peasants owned their plots it has almost always been done in cooperation by the men of the neighborhood. What on the American frontier would have been called a "bee" is known in Haiti as a *coumbite*, or *combite*, often carried on as an enterprise of the local *Société Congo*, the informal neighborhood group for mutual aid and fellowship.[6]

A man who has a large job on hand announces a coumbite for any day except Sunday, always a day of rest, and whatever other week-

[6] The word "coumbite" was apparently borrowed from the Spanish part of the island, and from the Spanish word *convidar*, convey. In Colombia "convite" means exactly what "coumbite" means in Haiti: a gathering of persons to work in common, or else a cooperative society for mutual agricultural self-help.

Professor Herskovits (*Life in a Haitian Valley*, chap. IV) describes the Société Congo in detail. The use of the name "Congo" indicates the African tradition, and is particularly noteworthy in connection with a kind of cooperative work which Herskovits finds predominantly Dahomean.

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day local practice dedicates to work in one's own fields—generally Monday or Tuesday. The prospect of working with one's fellows, of a midday feast with plentiful drink, of singing, talking, and hearing the news, is enough to induce most of the neighbors to come, even though the work will be hard. As with American log-rollings and house-raisings, there is a practical reason for accepting the invitation: by participating in other coumbites a man will be able to invite his neighbors to help him in his own larger tasks. The work is done in rhythm[7] as on Southern road gangs in the United States, with one man specially designated to beat the drum, blow the conch, or sing a topical song, to set the pace. While the men are at work, the women prepare the noonday feast.

This typical characteristic of Haitian rural life has been described in detail as it operates near the village of Mirebalais by Prof. Melville J. Herskovits. His contention is that the custom, in general and in detail, derives from Dahomey, West Africa, the home of many of the original slaves.[8] Although his evidence is impressive, there are nevertheless objections to it. Coöperative enterprise for tasks larger than one man can accomplish alone is common in the United States and in parts of Europe and South America, as well as in Africa. It is not an economic device which strikes one as requiring unusual inventiveness, for cases of it are common even where the participants have had no previous experience of it. Further, Dahomean practice could not have been kept up during slave days, nor yet during the régimes of Toussaint, Dessalines, Christophe, and Pétion. (The first three required forced labor under overseers, and landownership by peasants was still rare under Pétion, although a beginning had been made.) In the thirty years from 1790, when the last slaves arrived, until Christophe died in 1820, many old ways were certainly forgotten. Not a single one of the numerous books written by visitors during Boyer's quarter-century, 1818 to 1843, mentions the practice, which certainly must have struck Englishmen, Frenchmen, and Americans if it had been characteristic of the peasant life of the time. If one concludes that the coumbite did not become peasant practice until the mid-nineteenth century, all possibility of contact with Negroes familiar with Dahomean routine has disappeared. What

7. A Haitian poet, Charles F. Pressoir, entitles a book of his verses *Au Rythme des coumbites* (Port-au-Prince, 1933).
8. *Op. cit.*, chap. IV.

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527 On Saturday nights one hears the drums beating all over the country, but if one follows the sound he is more than likely to end [534] up at nothing more esoteric than a neighborhood dance. Other [535] musical instruments than drums are rare, but any community has drums; and these set a rhythm to which one can dance. Generally food is available at these affairs, as well as drinks both hard and soft. 273 It is not extraordinary to discover that a few of the men have drunk rather freely of clairin, the raw rum of the country; most drunkenness seems to lead to good-natured ribaldry rather than to offensive violence. It is unusual for a drunken man to cause damage of any 535 serious nature. The dancing corresponds neither to American ballroom dancing nor to set folk dancing. Most of it is done solo, and an individual participates or remains on the outskirts of the enclosure as 533 the mood of the moment impels him. Over the beat of the drum can be heard one of the current songs, more than likely a bit smutty in nature, and frequently poking fun at some well-known personage, or making allusions which in normal speech might seem crude.

541 One of the popular Sunday afternoon sports is the *gaguère*, or cock- [525] fight, held under a shelter back of a home. Much small betting goes on. The spectators sit or stoop close around the dusty ring, talking to the cock they are backing, commenting on the fight, offering advice to the owner. Between rounds the cocks are rubbed down, sprayed with water or rum, fondled and excited anew. Toward the latter stages of any fight the spectacle becomes gory and, to the uninitiated, distinctly cruel.

526 There is singularly little sport in Haiti. Élite youths play tennis; boys enjoy football; and swimming is a common diversion. Few sports are competitive and, so far as the writer has observed, the peasants have in their games practically nothing resembling organization.